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**Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) delivered the following opening statement at the full committee hearing *"Preparing Today's Students for Tomorrow's Jobs: Improving the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act"* on November 19, 2013.**

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Good morning and thank you, Chairman Kline.

Today's hearing will examine the critical role of career and technical education in preparing our nation's students for success in college and career. Reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 presents this committee with an opportunity to ensure students are equipped with the skills to succeed in a rapidly evolving 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

While the U.S. remains in the top 10 worldwide in the percentage of youth who enroll in college, we have dropped to 16th in the world for the proportion who obtain certificates or degrees. That's unacceptable if we plan to remain the world's economic leader. It is vital that we maintain and strengthen career and technical programs to be strong and successful. It is now estimated that two-thirds of the 47 million new jobs that will be created in America in the next 5 years will require some form of postsecondary education.

Half of these jobs will be filled by people with an associate's degree or occupational certificate. They will be electricians, construction managers, dental hygienists, paralegals, police officers, and computer techs and programmers. Today's career technical education programs, or CTE, are successfully preparing millions of Americans to succeed in both college and career. They provide students with the skills and knowledge that today's employers demand. Nationwide, many CTE programs are innovating to serve the evolving needs of students and of today's economy.

They are fostering educational environments that engage students with an integrated curriculum of core academic content and real-world, work-based relevance. But we must do more to spur innovation in delivery of CTE, to reward and replicate programs achieving positive outcomes for students and industry, and to ensure CTE is positioned to drive economic success through better workforce alignment and increased collaboration.

The Perkins Act has supported the development of in-demand skills among secondary and postsecondary education students of all backgrounds for many years. Yet there is growing consensus that federal investment needs to focus on relevant, rigorous, and high-quality CTE

programs that both better fit with labor-market needs and better prepare students to succeed in in-demand and high paying jobs: jobs and industries that not only contribute to our national economic competitiveness, but also set students on a path to earn a living wage, enjoy employer benefits, and offer the opportunity for career advancement.

Our nation still faces a “skills gap.” While millions of Americans struggle with unemployment in today’s economy, millions more jobs go unfilled.

Why? Because our nation’s education strategy lacks sufficient urgency and focus on training for the high reward, high demand jobs that a strong economy demands.

According to the International Survey of Adult Skills, published this month by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United States faces a very real challenge when it comes to production of a skilled workforce. Despite the rapid evolution of economic and industry demand, workers now entering the labor force are not more highly skilled than those currently leaving the workforce.

Simply put, we MUST “upskill” our workforce or face growing social inequity and diminishing economic vitality. We must strengthen our federal commitment to CTE and fully invest in CTE programs as a means to educational and economic success.

Partnering to design and implement high-quality programs aligned to current and future workforce needs is a shared responsibility. Educational success for every child demands a strong collaborative commitment.

Federal, state, and local government, secondary and postsecondary education, business and industry, organized labor, teachers and leaders, students, and community partners must *all* work to ensure CTE programs are meeting the challenges of our 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

Data shows CTE to be a powerful tool in engaging students, closing achievement gaps, and improving schools. While the average high school graduation rate remains under 75 percent, the average high school graduation rate for students concentrating in CTE programs is 90 percent. In transforming CTE through this reauthorization, we must prioritize equity of opportunity to participate in and benefit from CTE programs.

New and emerging technologies must be used to alleviate problems of limited access for students who are disconnected due to geography, socio-economic status, disability, or language barriers.

I look forward to hearing from our distinguished panelists, as you all are uniquely-positioned to provide insight on the future of career and technical education and the federal investment in addressing current and future challenges. I also look forward to working with Chairman Kline on a bipartisan effort to modernize federal support for CTE through reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006.

[House Committee on Education and the Workforce Democrats](#)